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# **When Europeanisation meets Organisation: Enhancing the Rights of Party Members in Central and Eastern Europe**

Sergiu Gherghina  
Department of Politics  
University of Glasgow

Benjamin von dem Berge  
Research Support  
Zeppelin University Friedrichshafen

## **Abstract**

The participation of members in intra-party decision making has been extensively documented in the literature. This article brings forward the concept of party member rights that adds the dimension of freedom of opinion and action within the party. It aims to identify the causes behind these rights in political parties from three Central and Eastern European countries (Hungary, Romania and Slovakia). It argues and tests how party age, Europeanization and party leadership change may enhance PMR. The empirical evidence draws on an original dataset based on standardized content analysis of 142 party statutes between 1988 and 2012. The results reveal important and robust effects of these variables when controlling for other determinants.

**Keywords:** political parties – members’ rights – party organization – Europeanization – Central and Eastern Europe

## **Introduction**

The role of party members and the development of party membership is widely acknowledged in the literature both in terms of their importance for the liaison between political parties and external environments and for intra-party functioning (Widfeldt, 1995; Poguntke, 2002; van Biezen et al., 2012; van Biezen and Poguntke, 2014; Gauja, 2015; Scarrow, 2015). Party members’ rights (PMR) received attention along the lines of participation in shaping the political will and decision-making process, of freedom to express their opinions, and of possibilities to form factions within the party (Katz et al., 1992; Hopkin, 2001; Kittilson and Scarrow, 2003; Kenig, 2009; Cross and Blais, 2012; van Haute and Carty, 2012; van Haute and Gauja, 2012; von dem Berge et al., 2013; Bernardi et al., 2016). Although the ‘party in central office’ and even more the ‘party in public office’ dominate modern party organizations and “represent the ‘core business’ of party activity” (Katz and

Mair 2002; Ignazi, 2014: 166), the 'party on the ground' (members) has not lost relevance (for a discussion about the three faces of a party, see Katz and Mair, 1993). Members are still important for the legitimization of parties (Ignazi, 2014: 166). Parties pursue the strategy of granting their members more rights in intra-party decision-making in order to counteract the loss of legitimacy in the citizenry which occurred to a large extent in the process of their turning away from society and towards the state (e.g. Scarrow et al., 2000: 149; Scarrow and Gezgor, 2010: 824; Cross and Blais, 2012: 128; Ignazi, 2014). Party membership bases today are smaller than several years ago, but they are also more powerful (Sarrow and Gezgor, 2010: 824).

In spite of this importance of members and their rights, little attention has been devoted to explaining variation in PMR across parties. The knowledge of what affects (a positive development) of PMR, can help external and internal promoters of democracy to democratize parties and thereby strengthen democracy itself. The research question guiding this article is the following: What are the determinants of PMR within political parties? Our quest for an answer focuses on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) for several theoretical reasons. As PMR is part of the broader concept of intra-party democracy and has effects on the broader concept of democratic consolidation (Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Webb et al. 2002; Whiteley and Seyd 2002; van Haute and Gauja 2015), its study becomes particularly relevant in the new democracies in CEE. The relevance of members may be particular because parties are less rooted in their societies and more state-oriented than parties in Western Europe (Gherghina, 2014a; Gherghina, 2014b; Powell and Tucker, 2014). Also, CEE parties are often considered to be more elite driven than Western parties since they did not primarily emerge out of societal cleavages but of decisions of political entrepreneurs and elites (Lewis, 1996: 15; Olson, 1998: 447; Birch, 2003: 14, 64; van Biezen, 2003: 204-207).

The weak societal rootedness of CEE parties becomes also apparent when looking at electoral volatility and membership size (Gherghina, 2014a; Powell and Tucker, 2014).

This article argues and tests the extent to which the age of political parties, the Europeanization process and party leadership change can enhance PMR. The choice of these three determinants is informed by three theoretical approaches presented in the following section. The empirical evidence draws on an original dataset based on standardized content analysis that includes 142 party statutes from 14 parties in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia between 1988 and 2012. The bivariate and multivariate analyses reveal the important effects of these three variables on PMR when controlling for other determinants such as party size, vote loss and government incumbency.

The first section of this article provides theoretical arguments for the effects on PMR and formulates three testable hypotheses. Next we introduce the case selection (countries and parties), type of data and variable operationalization. The third section includes the empirical analysis that focuses on the strength of effects, while the conclusion summarizes the key findings and reflects upon its implications for the study of party organizations.

### **Theorizing effects on PMR in CEE**

PMR can be defined as a combination of basic principles (freedom of opinion, speech and action within the party), participation in intra-party decision-making (program drafting, leadership selection, candidate selection, ballots on different issues), the right to be elected for intra-party positions and as candidates for public offices, and also the opportunities of party members whose opinions differ from the party majority to advance their views inside the party in order to be able to form alternative majorities. An 'increase' in PMR would mean that more of these rights are granted to members between at least two points in time

and, correspondingly, a 'decrease' in PMR would mean the opposite. This definition of PMR refers to 'traditional individual membership' (Scarrow, 2015: 30) that, in spite of emerging alternative forms of membership in modern parties (e.g. 'light membership' or 'cyber-members') (Gauja, 2015: 240, 242; Scarrow, 2015: 30-32), lie at the core of this article. This choice is motivated by the fact that traditional membership continues to be widespread and makes longitudinal comparisons possible, especially before the 2000s it was the only available type of membership. Prior to 'new forms' of membership, political parties were concerned with traditional membership structures to build stable party organizations and mobilize electoral support (Tavits, 2013; Gherghina, 2014a; Scarrow, 2015). This is especially true for the CEE parties that (re)emerged in the early 1990s; at this time, these parties exclusively offered 'traditional membership' to party supporters.

PMR are a component of party organization because they are explicitly defined in the party statutes, i.e. the legal heart of each party organization. More precisely, if PMR get violated by a party body, members usually can refer to these legal rights in a party-internal tribunal proceeding. As we focus on the formation of these organizational features, we ultimately deal with 'party *organizational* change' (Harmel 2002). Therefore, this is the overarching theoretical framework of this study. In its broadest sense, party change is defined as "all self-imposed changes in party rules, structures, policies, strategies, or tactics" (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 277) where especially changes in 'party rules' and 'structures' refer to the party organization.

Harmel (2002) identifies three theoretical approaches that can explain party organizational change: the 'life-cycle approach', the 'system-level trends approach' and the 'discrete change approach'. While the life-cycle approach and the system-level trends approach can be understood as rather '*evolutionary* models of party change', the discrete

change approach can be considered as a '*developmental*' model of party change' (see also Panebianco, 1988: 181-236). On the one hand, as evolutionary models the life-cycle approach and the system-level trends approach deal with rather long-term and sweeping changes. On the other hand, the discrete change approach ('developmental model') predominantly takes into account rather short-term political events as reasons for party organizational change. We use all these types to explain the evolution and development of PMR in CEE parties.

#### *The life-cycle approach: Party age and PMR*

In the life-cycle approach party change is understood as a natural process of a party's maturation (Harmel, 2002: 119, 128). From this perspective, parties grow up in an 'evolutionary process' and the main reason for change is the ordinary course of getting older (Harmel, 2002: 129). This means that party changes take place in certain stages in a party's life time (Harmel, 2002: 132). The life-cycle approach provides theoretical reasons to expect older parties to have a higher levels of PMR compared to younger ones.

Against the background of the life-cycle approach, organizational changes of CEE parties have to a large degree to be understood as 'evolutionary changes'. Both the communist successors and the revived parties (reemerging after 1989 with a prior existence before communism) underwent a 'natural evolutionary' process. In this sense, all CEE parties are situated at rather similar 'evolutionary stages' in which organizational changes have to be considered as normal transformations in the relatively early periods of their life-cycle. The first thing to be done by new parties in their attempt to survive is to set the bases of their organizations, i.e. a basic membership, a network of local branch offices, and a professional and permanent central office staff (Tavits, 2013: 2). Only after setting these bases they can

move their focus on more 'normative' issues like PMR, which are rather important for the long term survival of party organizations but not necessarily in the early period of building up the organization.

Furthermore, parties might learn over time that members are an important resource (Scarrow, 1996: 42-46; Mair, 1997: 146-152; Gauja, 2015: 240). Specifically in the CEE context, parties which regulate party membership in their statutes tend to have higher membership rates. A recent comparative study developed several nuanced categories to analyze party statutes using qualitative content analysis and indicates how members' rights greatly vary across political parties (Gherghina, 2014b). Since within Western parties PMR were enhanced over time (Scarrow, 2015: 206), we could expect that older CEE parties have more developed PMR than younger parties. These mechanisms may appear to privilege communist successors and to some extent revived parties because they could immediately draw on already existing organizational structures and resources when (re)founding the 'new' parties. It applies more to the communist successors since their organizations were established during the previous regime (Bozoki and Ishiyama, 2002).<sup>1</sup> Earlier research indicates that CEE parties did not become more centralized over time but, on the contrary, they made some reforms that targeted members especially with respect to candidate selection (Gherghina, 2014a). For example, in 2004, the Social Democratic Party in Romania introduced closed primaries (that were later abandoned). In light of these arguments we expect that the age of a party increases PMR (H1).

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<sup>1</sup> One intuitive determinant of PMR is the party ideology. However, in our case this is not useful because 1) political parties were quite fluid and parties altered their ideology over time, sometimes dramatically (e.g. Fidesz in Hungary or PDL in Romania), 2) ideology is quite fuzzy and has a different meaning across the investigated time frame (first vs second post-communist decade) and across countries and 3) some political actors such as the ethnic parties are difficult to label from an ideology perspective.

### *The system-level trends approach: Europeanization and PMR*

The system-level trends approach draws on changes in the environment of parties in order to explain party change (Harmel, 2002: 119, 129). Dramatic environmental changes in the evolutionary process of political parties might lead to fundamental party organizational change (Harmel, 2002: 124f., 128). In our case, the 'system-level' is the political system of the European Union (EU). In the period of investigation from 1988 until 2012, the political systems of CEE countries were subjected to a process of 'Europeanization' with a remarkable impact on them (e.g. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005). Europeanization is usually defined as the impact of European integration on policies, processes and actors of European nation states in a top-down manner (Eising, 2003; Ladrech, 1994: 69). While Europeanization has only a limited impact on West European parties and party systems, its influence on their CEE counterparts is veritably stronger (e.g. Carter et al., 2007: 9; Ladrech, 2008: 141f.).

For CEE parties Europeanization can be understood as an 'external shock' (Carter et al., 2007: 9). In party change theory, the term 'external shock' is used to describe abrupt and extreme changes in the environment of parties which exert a very strong pressure to adapt and therefore might lead to fundamental party change (e.g. Panebianco, 1988: 242, 246; Harmel and Janda, 1994: 265, 267f.). This argument suggests that the two theoretical concepts 'Europeanization of national parties' and 'party change' are closely related: since the central core of each Europeanization process is a 'change' on the national level, and as in the special case of the 'Europeanization of national parties' this change is executed by political parties, it has to be conceptualized as 'party change' (von dem Berge and Poguntke, 2013a: 876-878). For two reasons, CEE parties can be expected to have executed such a Europe-induced party change regarding the arrangement of PMR.



First, party organizational change (increase of PMR) is likely to occur over time in CEE parties because within the EU context these parties work together closely with West European parties (which possess longer traditions of PMR). This also holds for the pre-accession period because already in the 1990s the CEE parties were active within the Europarties (European party federations), where they cooperated closely with West European member parties (von dem Berge and Poguntke, 2013b: 319). In both of these cases, before and after EU accession, processes of ‘learning’ and ‘mimetism’ (copying good practices) can be expected to be important for party organizational changes of CEE parties regarding PMR. This can be understood as a rather ‘indirect’ influence of Europeanization.

Second, the influence of Europeanization on CEE parties can also occur in a rather direct manner, namely based on the influence of Europarties. According to von dem Berge and Poguntke (2013b: 316), the Europarties can be considered as “party political agents of Europeanization” in CEE countries, which means that they act as amplifiers which reinforce the pressures of indirect Europeanization effects. More precisely, the authors expect that those CEE parties which are officially connected to one of the two main Europarties EPP (European People’s Party) and PES (Party of European Socialists) tend to democratize their intra-party procedures over time. The reason is, that the Europarties are supposed to demand a minimum of intra-party democracy from their CEE partners because they understand themselves as ‘promoters of democracy’. And, moreover, undemocratic member parties would also undermine the legitimacy of the Europarty. Both Europarties achieve this goal by applying two strategies: ‘conditionality’, which is largely based on pressure, and ‘socialization’, which is largely based on persuasion efforts in the scope of specific training seminars (von dem Berge and Poguntke, 2013b). As the process of the Eastern enlargement of the Europarties, in which they exert the described influence on CEE parties, occurs within

the superordinate process of EU Eastern enlargement on the nation state level (Delsoldato, 2002: 270), it is conceptualized as a system-level trend. Since PMR are a component of intra-party democracy, Europarty influence on CEE parties (Europeanization) is expected to lead to an increase in PMR (H2).

### *The discrete change approach: Leadership change and PMR*

Compared to life-cycle and system-level induced party changes, discrete changes occur rather abruptly (Harmel, 2002: 125). According to this approach, the reasons for party change are short-term single events and the process of change is better described as 'developmental' than 'evolutionary'. The causes are either discrete external alterations in the environment of political parties or discrete internal circumstances within the parties (Harmel, 2002: 119, 125). Regarding the internal causes, according to party change theory, one of the most important factors for party change is an alteration in the leadership of a political party (Harmel and Janda, 1994; Müller, 1997; Harmel, 2002: 126f.). Harmel (2002: 128, 139) argues that the resignation of an older leader and the selection of "a younger and more dynamic leader" have the power to create conditions for party organizational change, one of these changes being PMR.

In the CEE context the role of the party leadership is important because – as already stated above – parties are more elite driven than in Western Europe (Lewis, 1996: 15; Olson, 1998: 447; van Biezen, 2003: 204-207). The CEE party leaders possess an exceptionally strong position within their parties and are often the decision-makers about PMR. There are two plausible causal mechanisms that make us believe that a leadership change may enhance PMR: a power-driven and a norm-driven approach. According to the power-driven perspective new party leaders may enhance PMR to convey a message of openness and

intra-party democracy. This could maintain their popularity and positive image among the party members that selected and promoted them in office but also among the broader electorate who could have been persuaded to join the party ranks. Their decision could also be seen as a reward for loyal members. All these actions increase leaders' legitimacy among members and intra-party power, e.g. leaders may implement policies in the future by using member ballots. From a norm-driven perspective, a leader with openness and positive attitudes towards the West is likely to develop different ideas about policies and intra-party structures compared to a leader socialized during communism. This difference lies in a learning process from Western parties that had already introduced the means through which party members were granted a decisive role in intra-party decision-making processes (Hopkin, 2001; Kittilson and Scarrow, 2003; Kenig, 2009; Cross and Blais, 2012). PMR were enhanced especially in the areas of candidate selection, leadership selection and manifesto adoption. As a consequence of these arguments, we expect leadership changes to increase PMR (H3).

#### *Further potential effects on PMR (control variables)*

In party change theory *electoral defeat* is regarded as the “mother of party change” (Janda, 1990: 5; Deschouwer, 1992: 9). The reason is that it forces parties to reevaluate their internal structures and processes (Panebianco, 1988: 243; Harmel and Janda, 1994; Cross and Blais, 2012: 130). Therefore, electoral defeat might have an influence on the development of PMR. For example, a party that suffers from an electoral defeat might increase PMR to attract more voters (and also members) because many parties believe that enhancing PMR has a positive effect on the public image of the party (Cross and Blais, 2012: 130; Scarrow, 2015: 63, 216).

Moreover, also the *size of a party* might have an impact on PMR. On the one hand, one could argue that large parties possess more developed party organizations than smaller parties and therefore they put more emphasis on party members and PMR. On the other hand, one can bring forward the argument that large parties give members less rights or small parties give members more rights. One reason could be that for small parties it might be easier to implement PMR than for large parties (from an organizational perspective). Similar to the argument presented above, another possible cause is that enhancing PMR helps parties to attract more members and therefore it helps them to grow – not necessarily regarding votes, but regarding members (Scarrow, 2015: 193f.). Furthermore, it is possible that *parties in opposition* give their members more rights than governing parties. This is because opposition parties will need to motivate and mobilize their members more intensively than parties which are frequently in government, and they can do this by enhancing PMR (Scarrow, 2015: 63). Moreover, parties in opposition possess more freedom for enhancing PMR because the party in public office is weakened (Cross and Blais, 2012: 130).

## **Research design**

Our analysis focuses on 14 political parties from three CEE countries which are included in the dataset of von dem Berge (et al. 2013) that we use for our analysis: Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The selection of countries is based on a most similar system design with similar traits in terms of transition challenges (e.g. Merkel, 2011), political institutional context (Ismayr, 2010), and party system structure, namely electoral volatility, the effective number of parties and party system polarization (Grotz and Müller-Rommel, 2011: 355f.). Table 1 presents all parties included in the analysis: the column entries list their abbreviation and full

name (in parentheses) in the original language. All selected parties are or were officially connected to one of the two main Europarties: EPP (representing the Christian Democratic and Conservative party family) and PES (representing the Social Democratic party family). However, these political parties cover a broad ideological spectrum from left-wing successors of the communist party (the MSZP in Hungary, the SDL in Slovakia, and the PD and the PSD in Romania) via social democratic (SDSS and SMER in Slovakia) and liberal parties (Fidesz and MDH in Hungary) to Christian democratic parties (KDNP in Hungary, PNT-CD in Romania, and KDH and SDKU-DS in Slovakia). Two ethnic parties (UDMR in Romania and SMK in Slovakia) are also included in the analysis. The unit of observation is the party statute and there is a total number of 142 included in the analysis: 53 in Hungary, 33 in Romania and 56 in Slovakia. The number of statutes differs from party to party and from country to country because some parties have adopted more statutes during the period of investigation and some have adopted less. As the number of Romanian parties is lower than in the other countries, also the number of statutes is lower.

The statutes were collected by native speaking coders. There were two coders in each of the three countries. All parties cooperated with the coders and the project team and provided their statutes or access to their archives. Additionally, public archives were used to collect the statutes. The analysis includes all statutes that were found by the project team. From a formal perspective, the statutes sometimes differ from party to party and from time period to time period. Statutes from the early 1990s are usually shorter and less structured than later statutes, when the parties became more professionalized. This is not problematic for the analysis, because the shortness of statutes with few references to PMR is a result regarding the measurement of PMR (few references to PMR = low PMR-score).

## Table 1 about here

The dependent variable of this study (PMR) comes from deductive and standardized content analysis of party statutes between 1988 and 2012 (von dem Berge et al., 2013).<sup>2</sup> The measure includes the simple mentioning of PMR in the statutes (item 1), the right to be informed about party activities (item 2) and the right to participate in the decision-making process of the party (item 3).<sup>3</sup> It also accounts for instances in which party members whose opinions differ from the party majority have the opportunity (in the sense of ‘freedom’) to advance their views inside the party in order to be able to form alternative majorities (items 4 and 5). Since there are no convincing theoretical reasons why one or some of these items have a stronger impact on PMR than others, the same weight is given to all items. When analyzing the party statutes, the items were measured as answers to the questions presented in Appendix 1. The answer options to each item were coded dichotomously as YES (1) or NO (0). The result is a cumulative index of PMR (a six-point ordinal scale ranging from 0 to 5) for each party statute. The coding was done by trained native speakers according to specific coding rules. Different measures of inter-coder reliability were conducted and they all indicate a relatively high degree of agreement between the coders (mean of all five items): Krippendorff’s Alpha = 0.74, Fleiss’ Kappa = 0.74 and Holsti’s Method = 0.88.

The independent variables are measured at the party level and they were collected from databases and party histories (for detailed information about coding, see Appendix 1). *Party*

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<sup>2</sup> The most important reason for using party statutes for the analysis is that they are the only available data source when trying to investigate changes in PMR from 1989 onwards (for further reasons see von dem Berge et al. 2013: 2f.).

<sup>3</sup> Item 3 includes a lot of different practices like participation in intra-party decisions on manifestos, leadership selection and candidate selection. In the context of the relatively young CEE parties in the period from 1988 to 2012 this high level of aggregation is reasonable, appropriate and suitable. When analyzing more developed parties from Western Europe, the mentioned individual processes of participation in intra-party decision-making have to be considered in more detail in order to have sufficient variation regarding the dependent variable among the parties under study.

*age* (H1) is a count measure that accounts for the period of time elapsed between the party formation and 2012. This variable reflects also the type of organization, one with particular relevance in the CEE context. For the successor parties – those political actors that inherited the organization of communist or satellite parties – age was calculated from the emergence of their predecessors. For revived parties age is calculated as the sum of their pre- and post-communist existence. This data is mainly taken from Bugajski (2002) and websites of the political parties. *Europeanization* (H2) is measured on a four-point ordinal scale as the status relative to Europarties and distinguishes between no status, observer party, associated party, and full member. This variable was coded on the basis of information provided by the Europarties. *Leadership change* (H3) is a dichotomous variable coded 1 whenever the leader changed and 0 when there is continuity in office. This data is taken from the European Journal of Political Research Political Data Yearbook.

Turning to the control variables, *party size* is measured as the share of votes received by the political party in the most recent legislative elections at national level (for the lower chamber) before the statute change.<sup>4</sup> *Vote loss* is a count measure that reflects the difference of votes between the two most recent legislative elections at national level before the statute change. When a statute was changed twice within an electoral cycle – between two elections – the vote loss for the second change is 0; vote loss could be calculated only for the first change in an electoral cycle. *Incumbency* is a dichotomous variable with value 1 for parties in government and 0 for those in opposition.

The methodology used for the empirical test of the hypotheses combines bivariate and multivariate statistical analyses. We run bivariate correlations between PMR and each of the

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<sup>4</sup> 'Size of membership organization' would be a better indicator to measure party size than vote share. Unfortunately, there is no reliable data on membership numbers of CEE parties (especially the small ones) throughout the 1990s.

independent variables. The multivariate analysis is an ordered logistic regression with robust clustered errors to compensate for the violation of independence of observations, i.e. the cases may be clustered on 14 political parties.

### **PMR and Its Determinants in CEE**

Party members enjoy a high number of rights in CEE. Table 2 presents the distribution in percentages of the number of rights across the investigated party statutes. The first column includes the pooled analysis on all 142 statutes, while each of the following columns presents the situation at country level. Overall, 45% of the analyzed statutes explicitly mention four rights for their members. The following most popular categories are those of three rights (20% of all statutes) and five rights provided to party members (15% of all statutes). At the other extreme, only 3% of the statutes do not include any right for party members and 7% give members only one right.

This observation indicates a tendency of most political parties in CEE to grant rights to their members. Such an approach can have two potential explanations. On the one hand, it was quite intuitive since a large number of citizens had adversarial attitudes towards parties due to their experiences during the communist regimes. To attract members, many political parties granted them rights within the organizations, to show people that they moved away from the opaque institutions of the communist parties in the past. On the other hand, in the attempt to win popular support, the successor parties wanted to break the tie – at least in the eye of the electorate – between them and their predecessors. Providing rights to members was one way to achieve this break-up with the past: all the successor parties (the MSZP in Hungary, the PD and the PSD in Romania, and the SDL in Slovakia) have a high number of member rights (between three and five) in their first statutes.



## Table 2 about here

However, at country level there is important variation with respect to the number of rights provided to members. In Hungary all party statutes envisage at least one right for members (the category of no right is empty), in Slovakia there is no party statute with one right, while in Romania there are no statutes with two rights. Instead, almost one quarter of the party statutes analyzed in Romania provide members only one right. Moreover, the equilibrium between the categories of PMR is very different across the investigated countries. In Hungary a similar percentage of statutes (approximately one quarter) provide members three, four or five rights. In Romania, we can observe a relative polarization of the amount of rights provided to members with almost half of the statutes give four rights to members and one quarter giving only one right. In Slovakia there is a tendency to provide many rights to members: the sum of percentages for the categories of three, four and five rights is close to 90% of the total number of statutes.

Figure 1 maps chronologically the level of PMR for each country between 1988 and 2012 (mean index-values of all parties in each country per year). There is a general trend to enhance PMR over time: after 1995 there is no single statute that completely ignores the rights of members and after 2000 an increasing number of parties give five rights to their members.

According to our theoretical argument, we see this empirically observable increase of PMR between 1988 and 2012 as ‘party organizational change’. Let us now turn to potential explanations for this variation and increase. The quest for the sources of variation regarding

PMR in CEE starts with bivariate relationships between this variable and the independent variables presented in the theoretical section.

**Figure 1 about here**

Table 3 presents the coefficients of the non-parametric correlation (due to the ordinal nature of some variables) both at general and country level. Starting with the pooled analysis, there is empirical support for H1: party age correlates positively (0.37, statistically significant at level 0.01) with PMR; this indicates that older parties give their members more rights. Regarding H2 on Europeanization, the positive correlation (0.26, statistically significant at the 0.01 level) shows that statutes adopted by full members of Europarties provide more rights to their members compared to statutes adopted by political parties when they are in the process of acquiring membership.

The two variables Europeanization and party age correlate with PMR on a relatively different basis. Although there are theoretical reasons to expect older parties to have an affiliation to Europarties – and thus to have an overlapping or even spurious correlation for one of them – the empirical results show a more nuanced picture. The correlation between the two variables is positive, but not as strong as expected (0.33, statistically significant at the 0.01 level).

Leadership change (H3) also correlates positively with PMR indicating a weak tendency of new leaders (0.16, statistically significant at level 0.1) to promote more rights for members. Turning to the control variables, larger parties and parties with limited vote loss between consecutive elections are slightly more likely to enhance membership rights compared to other parties. The correlation coefficient for incumbency shows no real difference between

parties in government and in opposition with respect to the amount of rights they grant to their members.

**Table 3 about here**

These observations also hold when comparing parties in the respective countries. The positive relationship between PMR and Europeanization, age and leadership change is consistent across the three countries. The highest values of the correlation coefficients are for party age with a maximum value in Romania (0.80, statistically significant at the 0.01 level). In Romania and Slovakia there is a medium correlation between PMR and party size but in a different direction: larger parties give their members more rights in Romania, while in Slovakia smaller parties include more rights to their members in the statute. These opposing relationships lead to a relatively low value of the correlation coefficient in the pooled analysis. A similar situation with relationships in different directions can be observed with incumbency: in Hungary parties in opposition are slightly more likely to provide their members more rights, while in Slovakia parties in government enhance PMR. Slovakia displays a different trend also with respect to vote loss being the only country where political parties losing electoral support enhance PMR. In the other two countries parties winning votes are more likely to enhance the rights of their members compared to those parties losing votes.

The multivariate analysis displayed in Table 4 uses two models both at general and country level: model 1 includes the three variables of our hypotheses that correlate the highest with PMR (Europeanization, age, and leadership change) and model 2 adds the three control variables. The table includes the results of the ordinal logistic regression. Their

interpretation will not be limited to statistical significance and will also consider the strength of the relationship. The values of the pseudo  $R^2$  reported in the table suggest that Model 2 better fits the outcome data than Model 1. The inclusion of the three control variables increases the value from 0.05 to 0.07. This relatively poor fit may have methodological causes, the number of cases being quite small. At country level the fit of the model is very good in Romania for both models (0.39 and 0.44) and gets better both in Hungary and Slovakia with Model 2 (0.19, respectively 0.14).

The age of the party (H1) has a small but statistically significant (at the 0.05 and 0.01 level) effect on PMR, in the direction already revealed by the bivariate analysis. Romania is the country in which the likelihood is the highest across the investigated countries (for both models), being also statistically significant. This finding is in line with the theoretical expectations and parties with already established institutions (the two successor parties and the revived political formations) provided more rights to their members. Age appears to have little (Model 2) or no impact (Model 1) in Slovakia, a finding that contradicts the relatively strong bivariate relationship from Table 3. In the Slovak case, the explanatory power of age disappears when put in a common model with Europeanization and leadership change (both correlating weaker in the bivariate analysis).

Both models find empirical support at the general and country level for the Europeanization hypothesis (H2). Overall, political parties that are full members of Europarties are 1.45 times more likely to provide more PMR compared to parties without full membership. A very strong effect (statistically significant at the 0.01 level) is observable in Romania when the odds are either 2.66 times higher in Model 1 or 1.99 times higher in Model 2. The explanation behind this relationship is that the Romanian parties with openness to the idea of joining European party families were subjected to examples of how

West European partners proceeded with their members and implemented these procedures at least partly within their own party organizations.

Leadership change (H3) has a strong effect on PMR in CEE: in the pooled analysis the statutes adopted after the political parties changed their leader are 1.59 times (Model 1) and 1.87 times (Model 2) more likely to grant more rights to members compared to statutes adopted by parties with continuity of leadership. One plausible explanation for this effect is the willingness of new leaders to reform the party. This is particularly the case when leaders underperformed in office. The new office holders come up with a plan to change the face of the party and granting more rights to members may be one avenue to follow. Unfortunately, there is no access to the platforms used by candidates in the party leadership races and this explanation remains only a logical possibility without empirical confirmation.

In Romania the effect is reversed and statutes adopted when leaders continued in office envisage more PMR compared to statutes adopted after leadership change. There are two possible explanations for such a behavior. On the one hand, the leaders continuing in office adopted reforms in the direction of more PMR to show members that attention is paid to them or to reward them for continuous support for the same leader. On the other hand, the new leaders are concerned with other issues such as the electoral performance of the party and neglect internal aspects. One reason for this approach is that usually new leaders are less experienced than the old ones and it takes a while until they learn how important members are. As soon as they learn, they enhance PMR although they continue in office and that links back to the first mechanism presented above.

**Table 4 about here**

Among the three control variables vote loss has a consistent and statistical significant effect with the strongest impact in Slovakia. This effect is contrary to what revealed by the bivariate relationships and political parties winning more votes compared to the previous election are 1.15 times more likely to enhance the rights of their members compared to parties losing votes. This change of direction can be explained through the inclusion of this variable in the same model with party size (the correlation between vote loss and party size is 0.53, not reported in Table 4). Smaller parties are consistently more concerned to provide their members more rights, but the effect is quite weak with a notable exception in the Slovak case. Finally, incumbency produces mixed effects: evidence from the pooled analysis, Romania, and Slovakia show that parties in government favor more rights for their members. In the latter the effect is very high with parties in government being 3.80 times more likely than parties in opposition to grant their members more rights. At the same time, the opposition parties in Hungary pursue the rights of their members to a greater extent than those in government.

## **Conclusions**

This study argued that party age, Europeanization, and leadership change lead to an increase of PMR in CEE political parties. The empirical analysis found consistent evidence of effects in the direction of our theoretical expectations, which were stronger than those of the control variables (party size, vote loss, and government incumbency). These results bear an important theoretical implication for the study of party organizations. They show that the complexity of organizational change cannot be conceived only through one of the three theoretical approaches captured by the theory of party organizational change, namely 'life-cycle approach', 'system-level trends approach' or 'discrete change approach'. Instead, the

analytical framework requires a combination of all these theoretical perspectives that considers endogenous (age and leadership change) and exogenous factors (Europeanization).

Our findings help understanding how members may receive rights both in newly emerged parties and in highly volatile electoral settings. Exogenous determinants play an important role in shaping the intra-party life. More precisely, the more important role played by Europeanization when compared to age in the process of enhancing PMR shows that without the external influence of Europarties and the mimetism associated with it, the likelihood to enhance PMR in the CEE region was quite limited. This finding has an important empirical implication for the study of party organizations, especially in the CEE context. It reveals that the inclusion of CEE parties into the Europarties during the process of EU Eastern enlargement lead to significant changes within the CEE party organizations. The Europarties exerted their influence through the application of ‘conditionality’ (pressure-based approach) and ‘socialization’ (normative persuasion approach) (von dem Berge and Poguntke, 2013b). To sum it up, the Eastern enlargement of the EU leads to an enhancement of PMR within CEE parties.

Due to the wealth of primary data that had to be collected, our analysis was limited to the study of political parties from three CEE countries. Since the analytical framework and research design are not country specific, further research on PMR can either include more CEE countries (with similar features) or West European parties (quite different from the analyzed in this paper). Because our case selection is based on a most similar system design, which also applies to the other current and former members of the two large Europarties coming from the 2004 and 2007 EU joiners, we expect the general results of this study to be largely generalizable to these parties as well. Also, further research could investigate

whether the enhancement of PMR was a reaction meant to prevent the gradual loss of members, i.e. other drivers for PMR besides the ones explored here. Furthermore, in line with the ongoing debate between types of parties in contemporary Europe, one could also look into the ways in which personalistic parties with strong leaders decide to shape their PMR.



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**Table 1: Political parties included in the analysis**

	EPP Partners	PES Partners
Hungary	KDNP (Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt)	MSZP (Magyar Szocialista Párt)
	FIDESZ, ab 1995 FIDESZ-MPP, since 2003 FIDESZ-	
	MPSZ ( <i>Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége</i> – Magyar	
	Polgári Szövetség)	
	MDF (Magyar Demokrata Fórum)	
Romania	PNT-CD (Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin	PDSR (Partidul Democratiei Sociale din Romania),
	Democrat)	since 2001 PSD (Partidul Social Democrat)
	UDMR (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară România)	PD-FSN, since 1993 PD (Partidul Democrat)*
	PD, since 2007 PD-L (Partidul Democrat-Liberal)*	
Slovakia	KDH (Kresťanskodemokratické Hnutie)	SMER, since 2005 SMER-SD (SMER – Sociálna
	MKDH (Maďarské Kresťanskodemokratické	Demokracia)
	Hnutie), since 1998 SMK (Strana Maďarskej	SDL (Strana Demokratickej Ľavice)
	Koalície)	SDSS (Sociálnodemokratická Strana Slovenska)
	SDKU, since 2006 SDKU-DS (Slovenská	
	Demokratická a Kresťanská Únia – Demokratická	
	Strana)	
	8 Parties	6 Parties

\* In 2005 the PD changed its Europarty membership from PES to EPP.

**Table 2: Distribution of Member Rights in the studied CEE Parties (%)**

	General	Hungary	Romania	Slovakia
No rights	3	0	6	4
One right	7	4	24	0
Two rights	10	19	0	7
Three rights	20	25	12	19
Four rights	45	26	49	61
Five rights	15	26	9	9
N	142	53	33	56

**Table 3: Correlation coefficients for PMR in CEE**

	General	Hungary	Romania	Slovakia
Age	0.37***	0.41***	0.80***	0.44***
Europeanization	0.26***	0.27**	0.31*	0.26**
Leadership change	0.16*	0.18	0.17	0.17
<i>Controls</i>				
Party Size	0.09	0.06	0.30*	-0.24*
Vote loss	0.06	0.07	0.10	-0.11
Incumbency	-0.02	-0.11	-0.03	0.17
N	122-142	44-53	29-33	49-56

Notes: Reported coefficients are Spearman rank.

N differs due to the missing values on some variables.

Significance levels are: \* p < 0.1; \*\* p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < 0.01.

**Table 4: Ordinal logistic regression for PMR in CEE**

	General	Hungary	Romania	Slovakia
<b>Model 1</b>				
Age	1.02** (0.01)	1.06 (0.05)	1.10*** (0.02)	1.01 (0.01)
Europeanization	1.41* (0.29)	1.21 (0.50)	2.66*** (0.89)	1.54 (0.76)
Leadership change	1.59 (0.53)	1.23 (0.47)	0.68 (0.36)	2.30 (1.35)
N	136	47	33	55
Log pseudolikelihood	-191.41	-64.03	-26.81	-60.36
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.08	0.39	0.05
<b>Model 2</b>				
Age	1.03*** (0.01)	1.11** (0.05)	1.12** (0.05)	1.04 (0.02)
Europeanization	1.45* (0.32)	1.84 (0.77)	1.99*** (0.46)	1.43 (0.73)
Leadership change	1.87 (0.87)	1.92 (1.32)	1.25 (1.01)	2.25 (2.41)
Party Size	0.98 (0.03)	0.93 (0.04)	0.97 (0.06)	0.86 (0.09)
Vote loss	1.04*** (0.01)	1.06*** (0.02)	1.06 (0.04)	1.15* (0.08)
Incumbency	1.08 (0.51)	0.83 (0.56)	1.03 (0.75)	3.80 (4.63)
N	115	42	28	44
Log pseudolikelihood	-157.89	-50.75	-21.28	-38.31
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.07	0.19	0.44	0.14

Notes: Reported coefficients are odds-ratios, robust clustered standard errors in brackets.

Significance levels are: \* p < 0.1; \*\* p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < 0.01.



## Appendix 1: Variable Operationalization

Variable	Measurement
	1. Are party members' rights explicitly mentioned in the statute?
DV:	2. Do party members have the right to be informed about party activities?
Party	3. Do party members have the right to participate in party decision-making?
Members'	4. Do party members have the right to express divergent opinion within the party and/or in
Rights	public?
(PMR)	5. Do party members have the right to form factions within the party?
	Note: Codes: 1 = Yes, 0 = No. Cumulative index: 0 = no rights to 5 = all rights for the members
	Europarty Membership:
IV:	0 = none
Europeanizati	1 = observer party
on	2 = associated party
	3 = full member
	Note: Full members in EUCD were treated as EPP observer parties
	Number of years from creation (0 to 90)
IV:	Note: In the case of successors we added the age of the party to that of the predecessor. In
Party Age	addition to the successors of the communist parties in all three countries, we considered the SMK
	as a successor of the MKDH in Slovakia (see Table 1).
IV:	0 = the same leader in office
Leadership	1 = change of leader
change	
CV:	Share of votes in the most recent national elections before the adoption of the statute
Party size	Note: For parties running in coalitions we calculated the share of votes based on the share of
	seats in Parliament (e.g. KDNP in 2006 with Fidesz)
CV:	The difference of votes in two consecutive elections at the national level before the adoption of
Vote loss	the statute (for statutes adopted within an electoral cycle, this value is 0)
CV:	0 = party in opposition
Incumbency	1 = party in government

Legend: DV = Dependent Variable; IV = Independent Variable; CV = Control Variable.

## Appendix 2: Coding rules of the dependent variable PMR

Item	Coding Rules	Quantification
1	Code YES if there is a special paragraph listing member's rights. Code NO if the member's rights are implicitly but not explicitly mentioned or if rights are not mentioned at all.	Yes = 1 No = 0
2	Code YES if explicitly stated that members have a right to be informed about party activities. Such rights could be (but are not limited to) reading the meeting protocols or request information from the party. If no reference is made to the members' rights to be informed or if the members do not have this right, code NO.	Yes = 1 No = 0
3	Code YES if members' right to participate in the party decision-making is explicitly mentioned in the statute. Code YES for expressions such as: party members have the right to determine the policy/composition of the party, have the right to vote, etc. Code NO if there is no information about how individual members can contribute to the party decision-making or if the information is implicit.	Yes = 1 No = 0
4	Code YES if the statute gives members the right to express divergent opinions at least within the party. If the party members are allowed to express a minority opinion in public or in the media also code YES, because both the public and the media are more inclusive than the party. If there is no mention of this right, or if members are prohibited from expressing divergent opinions code NO.	Yes = 1 No = 0
5	Code YES if the right to form a faction is explicitly mentioned (the wording is not important—but it must be clearly and directly stated that members have a right to form factions). Code NO—if it is mentioned that forming faction is prohibited.	Yes = 1 No = 0

Figure 1: The Formation of Member Rights in the studied CEE Parties

